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ABSTRACT

By providing background information, reviewing current practice, and identifying and analyzing related issues, the authors formulate and recommend solutions for strengthening the parent-school relationship, particularly as related to P.L. 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act). Section I provides background information on the law and descriptions of nine programs with parent education/involvement components which include the Parents Readiness Education Project--PREP (Detroit, Michigan): the Portage Project (Portage, Wisconsin): and the Center to Assist Parents and Professionals--CAP-P (Des Moines, Iowa). Literature on the parent-school relationship is reviewed in a second section: and two proposals are outlined, the first related to the necessity for revising and improving traditional approaches to parent-school relationships through awareness level public relations techniques, and the second focused on the training or skill building necessary to ensure the successful institutionalization of such a partnership. A final summary section lists four concerns and needs identified by parents and educators and stresses the role of State Regional Resource Centers as significant providers of information and training. A resource listing concludes the document. (SBH)

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EC

# Resource Report No. 2

# PARENT-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP:

## AN ANALYSIS OF SERVICE DELIVERY AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES PROVIDED UNDER P.L. 94-142

BY MIDWEST REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
MIDEAST REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

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**February 1980**

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# THE PARENT-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Resource Report No. 2
An Analysis of the State-of-the-Art of
Service Delivery and
Technical Assistance Activities
Provided to SEAs and LEAs
Under P.L. 94-142

Staff Members of the
Midwest Regional Resource Center
Drake University
1332 Twenty-Sixth Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50311

Nona M. Flynn, Ed.D.
Mid-East Regional Resource Center
George Washington University
1901 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

LEARNING RESOURCE BRANCH
DIVISION OF MEDIA SERVICES
BUREAU OF EDUCATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED

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# *Foreword*

With the significant expansion of educational programs for the handicapped as a result of recent legislation, most notably Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Act of 1975, it is imperative that states be provided with the necessary support systems to implement such programs as the law requires. Often, what is needed most is information: that is, best practices, work on the development of models and systems, and current definitions to implement legislation. This type of information is often categorized as technical assistance, but it is information, nonetheless.

In 1970 the authors of Public Law 91-230 (Education of the Handicapped Act), Part C, anticipated the need for information by providing for a national program of Regional Resource Centers (RRCs) "which will develop and apply the best methods of appraising the special educational needs of handicapped children referred to them and will provide other services to assist in meeting such needs." Currently, RRCs provide technical assistance to state education agencies (SEAs) and through them to local school districts and handicapped children. There have been a number of work-scope definitions and regional configurations for RRCs during the past eight years. During this period, the RRCs have demonstrated flexible and successful means of providing states with technical assistance.

As the sharing of information continues within the RRC system, it is apparent that general national concerns emerge. What happens, however, is that a multiplicity of uncoordinated efforts are expended toward finding a solution, when the answer might best be sought through a coordinated effort. To this end, a series of Resource Reports has been established by the RRCs.

By virtue of their close association with all of the states, RRCs are in an advantageous position to feel the national pulse with regard to the critical life signs in special education; the RRCs have access to needed information. When an issue is identified as a significant national concern, usually by common consensus of the RRCs (though there may be no formal pronouncement of the fact), an RRC will undertake to research the issue and present the results of this effort for review. In this way, a center or a consortium of centers may tackle a particular issue with the confidence that the issue is either unique to the region(s) or that it is of significant national concern. Through a carefully designed process of review and editing, Resource Reports are created by the RRC system to formally address these critical issues in a timely fashion.

It is hoped that as more and more of these issues are addressed, there will be time for a look at additional emerging issues. Thus, the Resource Reports may serve as a means of addressing the issues before they become critical. The Resource Reports then serve both a short-range purpose and a long-range function. In either case, they are to provide the basic information needed in the development of educational programs for the handicapped.

James A. Tucker,
Editor

# *Preface*

Momentous changes are taking place across the country in the relationship between parents of exceptional children and educators in schools. This paper traces the parent and educator as they progress from traditional role models to the cooperative partnership strongly advocated in current literature.

Fanning (1977) noted the following:

> The concept of a cooperative relationship between parents and school officials can become a reality through the vehicles of due process and all of its ramifications. . . . These vehicles for the development of cooperative relationships exist in law, having been formulated and upheld in the courts. Now it is up to parents and school officials to make it happen for the good of children.

These cooperative relationships between parents and educators are now being realized in various programs and model settings.

In addition to assisting in the development of a number of parent-school related programs and products in the Mid-East and Mid-Western states, the authors of this descriptive paper have conducted numerous site visits and surveys of parent-school related programs throughout the country. It is their conviction that dynamic leadership by educators as well as parents, at all levels of involvement, is now required to reach the goal of a true parent-school partnership.

With the passage of P.L. 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, new roles and relationships were assigned to parents and school officials. The parent has been given the opportunity to insure the best interests of a handicapped child by assuming a place beside the educator as an equal partner in the educational process. However, the adjustment to this new role has been equally as difficult for parents and educators, and at times has become the subject of controversy.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to assist in the development of a functional parent-educator relationship. By providing background information, reviewing current practice, and identifying and analyzing related issues, the authors will formulate and recommend solutions for strengthening the parent-school partnership in the educational process.

The authors would particularly like to thank the following persons for reviewing this document prior to publication: the directors, Ray Feltner, Mid-West Regional Resource Center and Ray Cottrell, Mid-East Regional Resource Center; Peter Fanning, Colorado State Department of Education; Robert Marion, University of Texas; Ronald Yoshida and Norm Howe, Division of Media Services, Bureau of Education for the Handicapped; and Barbara Scheiber, Closer Look.

# *Introduction*

Parents and educators have, until recently, accepted their traditional roles in the school setting. P.L. 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, forced a reevaluation of those roles. However, the reassigning of parent/educator roles and responsibilities has not always resulted in the parent-school partnership.

While parent-school partnerships (PACER, Minnesota; PREP, Michigan; Portage Project, Wisconsin; Re-Ed, Kentucky; Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center, Virginia; Parent Training in Educational Cooperation for the Handicapped Project, California; CAP-P, Iowa) do exist, current activities on a nationwide scale have often fallen short of a true partnership. In fact, a resistance toward parental involvement in educational planning is still found among educators (Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufmann, & Maxwell, 1979). The Tenth Annual Gallup Poll on Education (1978) indicated that parents have not accepted their newly acquired responsibilities. Parents are still, in many cases, ready to pass on to the schools the responsibility for their child's educational success.

What will follow is a review and examination of issues and concerns related to the parent-school partnership. It is hoped by the authors that the parents of handicapped children and the educators involved in their welfare will find the subsequent solutions helpful as they seek to resolve their newly defined roles. The information presented in this resource report has been divided into: (1) background—a review of pertinent laws, regulations and current practices regarding the parent-school partnership; (2) concerns and recommendations—a discussion of those delineated in the literature, as well as those noted by the authors as a result of a survey to elicit projected needs assessment, and proposals; and (3) summary.

# Background

## Laws and Regulations

Over the past quarter century, and specifically during the past decade, many court decisions have given recognition and shape to the concept of a free, appropriate public education for all. In the late sixties and early seventies, parent and advocacy groups began to realize that handicapped children were being denied the opportunity for an appropriate public education. A review of litigation reveals the impact of these two groups.

The foundation for the development of the right to education for handicapped children lies in the U.S. Supreme Court Decision in *Brown v. Board of Education, 1954*. Although the arguments raised in the Brown case challenged public school segregation on the basis of race, the basic principle of equal opportunity for an education was carried forward in the arguments presented on behalf of handicapped children.

Prior to 1970, most state laws provided for separate education of handicapped students within whatever fiscal limits legislatures chose; two landmark cases changed this. The Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Children entered into a consent agreement with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (*PARC v. Pennsylvania, 1971*), in which the state agreed to provide a free, appropriate public education for the mentally retarded children of the state. A short time later, U.S. District Judge Joseph Waddy, in a suit filed against the Washington, D.C. Board of Education (*Mills v. Board of Education*, 1972), issued a decree which affirmed the right of all handicapped children to a publicly supported education, including appropriate alternatives for those children who might be unable to attend regular classes or schools.

With PARC and Mills cases providing the impetus, a flood of legislation on the right to an appropriate education was introduced and passed in various states, as well as in the U.S. Congress. At the federal level, this culminated in Public Law 92-142, The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. In enacting P.L. 94-142, Congress recognized the impact of recent litigation, specifically referring to Brown, PARC, and Mills as catalytic agents for the Federal Law. The resulting effort, at times spearheaded by a few parents of handicapped children, led to momentous changes with potential impact for all parents of the handicapped.

The new legislation meant a chance for a free, appropriate public education for all handicapped students. For all parents of handicapped children, the new legislation meant a chance to become actively involved in their child's education. For educators, it meant that new ideas and responsibilities had to be assumed, if the intent of the legislation was to be actualized.

## Current Practice

*Programs, Projects, Centers*

In order to identify and analyze issues regarding the parent-school partnership, and recommend solutions, it is necessary to examine current practice. A number of programs, projects, and centers, which vary greatly in structure but have a component for parental involvement and/or participation and parent education would include the following:

1. *Parents Train Parents—A Project to Educate Parents of Handicapped Children about State and Federal special Education Laws (PACER); Minneapolis, Minnesota.* Pacer is a coalition of parent groups which work together and share the responsibility of parent education and training for parents of handicapped children. The project was initiated in September, 1978, through a grant from the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, Division of Personnel Preparation. The project helps parents to understand the new special education laws, and encourages them to work with schools to develop appropriate programs for their children. These goals are realized through five levels of activity: (a) public information; (b) workshops for all parents of handicapped children; (c) workshops for specific groups, such as parents of preschool handicapped children or single disability organizations; (d) advocacy training; and (e) individual advocacy assistance to parents.
2. *Parents Readiness Education Project (PREP); Detroit, Michigan.* PREP is an early-intervention project for academically high-risk preschool children. Parents attend classes to learn to become effective change agents for their own children, and high school students learn pre-parenting skills while working with children. Increasing parents' awareness of how their everyday activities can be a learning experience for their child is a major goal. Parents and children attend PREP classes one morning a week. The parent observes in the classroom and receives activities to do daily at home with the child. Parents also meet in a group to discuss topics relating to raising and nurturing children. Additionally, high school

seniors are given child development course credits for working individually with the preschoolers to stimulate language and conceptual development, and to enhance self-concepts. The model has been adopted in inner-city, suburban and rural areas, and diverse socio-economic areas.

3. *The Portage Project: A Home Approach to Early Education of Handicapped Children; Portage, Wisconsin.* The Portage Project is a home-teaching program serving multi-categorical handicapped children from birth to six years of age. The program provides a home teacher to each family, each week, to aid parents in (a) assessing the child's present skill-level in five developmental areas (b) targeting emerging skills, (c) helping them to develop skills necessary to teach their own children, (d) defining appropriate teaching techniques, and (e) evaluating the child's performance. The program follows a precision teaching model, and is based on the premise that effective parent involvement is the main ingredient in effective, long-term, early childhood intervention. A systematic parent training component to improve parental skills in the teaching and child management domains is provided during the regular home-visit session.
4. *RE-ED School of Kentucky; Louisville, Kentucky.* RE-ED is a short-term plan for the re-education of emotionally disturbed/behaviorally disordered children, in grades 1-6, and of average or above-average academic/intellectual potential. Its objective is to help such children to achieve just enough reorganization of behavior to allow them a higher probability of success in a regular classroom. The emphasis is on unlearning negative behavior patterns and learning positive ones. Meetings with parents are designed to encourage positive parental behaviors and management. Individualized academic and behavior-change programs, based on problem identification and educational pretesting, are employed. These plans begin and end with parental participation in group dynamics and, if needed, therapy at a comprehensive care center. Visits to RE-ED by the referring school's counselor, principal, and teachers are geared to keep parents and school secure in the belief that the child belongs to them, and that RE-ED is the least restrictive placement.
5. *Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center; Alexandria, Virginia.* The Center offers a 15-hour Parent Training Course to help parents of children in special education assess their child's learning strengths and needs, to set realistic and appropriate goals, to present their view of their child in a positive and assertive way in meetings with school personnel, and to understand the procedures and regulations set up by local school divisions to assure the handicapped child's appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Additionally, the Center consults with individual families to assist in preparing for eligibility meetings, individualized education programs, program reviews and due process hearings.

   The Center is funded by a grant from BEH Division of Personnel Preparation, a Virginia Department of Education contract, contributions and fees derived from consultation services. There is no charge for the Parent Training Course.

   Beginning in Spring, 1980, the Center will train teams of parents and professionals to carry out the Parent Training Course in their own localities.
6. *Parent Training in Educational Cooperation for the Handicapped Project; Alameda, California.* Project TECH is designed to provide assistance to parents and school/community staff so that they can become cooperative partners in planning individualized educational programs (IEPs) for children. The project provides training of trainers in addition to training of consumers; on-going consultation is available, as well as a resource library. Project TECH is funded by the California Office of Special Education/Personnel Development Unit.
7. *Center to Assist Parents and Professionals (CAP-P); Des Moines, Iowa.* The goal of the CAP-P project is to increase the involvement of parents, teachers, and students in the educational planning process for handicapped students. Inservice training is provided for teachers, parents, and students, and is designed to increase participation in the IEP process. In addition, parents are trained as trainers. CAP-P is a Title IV-C project.
8. *Model Demonstrations of Direction Service (DSDs).* Through the award of individual contracts with BEH, Learning Resources Branch, the twenty-three model demonstrations of Direction Service are to provide alternative solutions or the systematic matching of a handicapped child's needs with the proper available services to satisfy those needs; and to define a program of information services for the parents; guardians, teachers, and others working with handicapped children. The child's full range of education and related needs are matched with the local service system

capabilities. While encouraged to develop unique approaches to this common workscope, each demonstration works directly with parents, educators, and other service providers in seeking to initiate or enhance the client-service relationship.

9. *State Regional Resource Centers (RRCs).* RRCs are directing a significant amount of their resources toward the improvement of the parent-school partnership. The contractual service goal of the RRCs is to assist state education agencies (SEAs) and, through them, local education agencies (LEAs) in providing a free, appropriate public education for all handicapped children. Currently these services are directed toward the individualized education program (IEP). RRCs are in a unique position to extend assistance to SEAs and LEAs working to develop partnerships with their parent constituencies. Thus, their activities cannot be ignored in a review of current practice.

*A Summary Report*

In an attempt to gather more specific information about both the nature and extent of their activities related to the parent-school relationship, fourteen RRCs, ten model DSLs, and two national service agencies were contacted. Two types of information were elicited from these sources:

1) Current activities related to enhancing parent involvement.
2) Needs for future activities which would enhance parental involvement.

The current activities may be summarized under three broad activity categories: (a) training, (b) information/product dissemination, and (c) technical assistance/consultation. Regardless of the delivery mechanism, the recipients of these services were generally found to be: state department personnel, college and university faculty members, representatives of LEAs and parents.

With regard to category (a), training, the following topics were addressed: basic services available to handicapped children, the provisions of P.L. 94-142, the components of the IEP, the IEP process, managing a child's activities, prioritizing goals, recordkeeping, communication skills, and working with school personnel.

In addressing category (b), information/product dissemination, the survey identified thirty-one items which had been developed specifically to encourage parent-school involvement. The scope of these activities ranged from a glossary of technical terms, to several brief topical mini-products, and to a comprehensive three-day workshop on the IEP process and the development of a variety of parent handbooks.

Category (c), technical assistance/consultation, was provided for in a number of ways:

- planning/conducting of topical workshops
- assisting in the organization and implementation of task forces addressing the area of increased parent involvement in the educational process
- developing and conducting a variety of needs assessments
- developing products which support technical assistance efforts
- assisting in the development of parent advisory groups
- providing direct assistance to parents and educators in the writing of IEPs

# *Issues and Concerns*

## The Literature

The ultimate purpose of this paper is to formulate and recommend solutions for strengthening the parent-school partnership. A review of recent literature relative to interpretations, adaptations, or elaborations of current practices reveals many of the adjustments parents and educators have made, or are advocating be made, to facilitate their new partnership role.

A number of references directly cite activities which are designed to improve the parent-school partnership. A recent text by Rutherford and Edgar (1979) provides a guide to interaction and cooperation between parents and teachers. Interventions such as problem solving and values clarification, applied behavior analysis, and interpersonal communication skills are discussed. Also explored is the issue of child advocacy from the perspective of the parent, the teacher, and the teacher-parent advocacy team approach.

Kroth (1979) presents techniques for successful parent conferencing that will create an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect. He includes specific recommendations for involving parents as active participants through parent group meetings that explain P.L. 94-142, the local IEP form utilized, the IEP procedures, and conference preparation strategies.

Other references describe model programs which have been implemented with success. Feldman, Byalick, and Rosedale (1975) described several model programs for parents. These programs focused primarily on counseling and training to help parents perceive their children in more positive ways. Information about community services and techniques for behavior management was provided. Reported effects of the model programs were improved parent-child interaction; a more trusting, satisfying parent-educator relationship; and the development of parental attitudes: namely, that they are a valuable, positive force in their child's education.

Yoshida and Gottlieb (1977) proposed a model to enable school systems to involve parents prior to the IEP development. The process for implementing the model was to examine the role of the parent at various stages in the appraisal process, and evaluate their influence in the planning process. The authors theorized that the benefits of early active parent participation would increase the likelihood of agreement with the school's placement decision, greater parent receptivity to school demands, and parent cooperation in home efforts to deal with the child. The team relationship that may be created by the model's full implementation was considered a necessary prerequisite to the mandated partnership in IEP development.

McAffee and Vergason (1979) present a model for improving educational effectiveness in which parents and educators (a) develop mutually agreeable role definitions, (b) compromise, (c) negotiate, (d) accept responsibility, and (e) employ mediation techniques. The IEP is thus considered a contractual agreement developed jointly by parent and educator, creating a relationship of mutual responsibility.

Peters and Stephenson (1979) suggest the implementation of a training program for parents of learning disabled children which emphasizes the growth of parental understanding of the sensitive and complex interaction between the child's self-concept and his learning difficulties; the development of modes of child management which incorporate positive patterns of interaction, sensitive listening, and social reinforcement; and the provision for parent-directed home reinforcement activities for the cognitive and language skills introduced in the classroom. Parents are recognized as important contributors to the child's total education by facilitating and extending the social/academic environment of the school.

Finally, a number of references indicate specific areas of concern. The Tenth Annual Gallup Poll on Education (1978) revealed information about the public's attitudes toward education. It indicated that parents had passed on the responsibility for the educational success of their children to the schools. Parents seem to be convinced that the task of education is best left up to the educators.

A study by Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufman, and Maxwell (1979) highlighted educators' current attitudes concerning parental involvement, and, in fact, demonstrated a firm resistance of educators toward meaningful parental impact on educational planning. Investigators questioned more than 1,500 planning team members in Connecticut. Members were asked to indicate which parental roles on a planning team they would support. Of twenty-four possible roles, only two received majority support; and both of those roles—gathering information and presenting information—appeared to be passive in light of the decision-making process. The respondents expressed a strong dislike for parental involvement in evaluation, monitoring, or management of school programs. The study seemed to indicate that the majority of educators' attitudes do not correspond with the mandates of parental involvement set forth in P.L. 94-142, nor do educators seem to recognize the benefits of parental involvement in the lives of handicapped children.

Yoshida (1979) identified community level assistance as a need of parents seeking support services, while Brown and Spoff d (1975) published just such a handbook for applicability to a state-wide audience. Closer Look, a federally funded agency for parents, provides a similar referral service linking parents of handicapped children to state and local support service agencies and advocacy groups (Shiber, 1979).

Possibly Pechter (1979) best summarizes the entire arena of concern when he identifies another problem confronting those parents who are willing to be actively involved in their child's educational process: schools are caught up in the process of trying to meet the mandates of P.L. 94-142, and parental involvement is occasionally lost in the process. Though they possess knowledge of safeguards protecting parents, schools are pressured by concerns with paper compliance, such as parental signatures on forms, and they are not able to focus significant effort on meaningful parental involvement. Parents who are prepared to function as equal partners with educators in the educational planning process can be viewed as threatening. They are considered problematic in that they may interrupt the smooth functioning of the process. Parents and educators can never function as equal partners in the process of educational planning if parents continue to graciously accept what the school offers, without considering alternatives.

To summarize the previous four reports, [Gallup (1978); Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufman, and Maxwell (1978); Yoshida (1979); Shiber (1979); and Pechter (1979)] consider parent apathy, educator resistance, and educational bureaucracy as impediments to implementing the parent-school partnership.

## Projected Needs Assessment

In addition to this review of the professional literature, a survey relative to the needs of service providers as they relate to prevailing practices may help to assess the impact of future activities. A preceding section of this paper cited a survey in which fourteen RRCs, ten model DSDs, and two national service agencies were contacted regarding their current parent involvement activities. The survey also requested information regarding the need of future activities that would enhance parental involvement. In spite of their many reported parent involvement activities, one universal concern surfaced: a low level of active involvement in the educational planning process exists among parents and educators.

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Inspector General's report (1979) stated the following:

> It is not common for parents to make substantive contributions to the development of the educational program or to help monitor the child's progress. This concern can be further defined by identifying two specific parent subgroups. A large group of parents are attending IEP meetings and following the letter of the law. However, these parents do not see themselves as equal partners in the parentschool partnership, as evidenced by reports that they are not functioning as equal members of the team. However, they are contributing to the development of their child's educational program as intended in the spirit of the law. On the other hand, there remains a large group of parents who, for whatever reason, have not been involved in the IEP process at all. Sometimes referred to as 'hard-to-reach,' these parents are making no contribution to their child's educational program.

Two additional concerns were expressed repeatedly in the process of soliciting information about future activities. Nearly all of those interviewed expressed a need for further training in some aspect of parent involvement. In addition, most identified the group appearing to need the most assistance as the apathetic, uninvolved, or "hard-to-reach" parent. At the Senate Labor and Human Resources Subcommittee on the Handicapped/Oversight Hearings (1979), parental testimony concurred. Parents stated that parental involvement in the IEP process needs to be increased, and that parents and educators need clarification as to their respective responsibilities in the IEP process.

The concerns and needs identified in this section serve to verify the fact that in spite of present activities summarized in the Current Practice section of this paper, the efforts are inadequate and will not by themselves lead to the fulfillment of the goal to develop a new partnership between parents and educators.

An analysis of information already presented in sections which discussed current practice and literature, as well as needs assessment presented in this portion of the paper, leads to the following broad needs statements:

1. Parents and educators are establishing a new foundation for managing education; it is a time of change and uncertainty. Parents and educators must acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to create and implement a productive partnership.
2. Parents and educators seem to distrust each other, and do not always believe in the parent-school partnership. Both must develop an attitude of mutual trust and respect for each other's capabilities. This may then manifest itself in acceptance of the belief that more may be accomplished by working together than either group may accomplish working by itself.

3. Parents are afraid. Basically they recognize this as a complex situation and don't feel prepared for their new role as an equal partner with educators in the educational planning process. Many parents still want to delegate this responsibility to the school and, as a result, do not become involved in the educational process. An attempt needs to be made to involve parents who previously have not been involved.
4. The many agencies and population groups proposing to share the common goal of effecting a working parent-school partnership must develop and implement functional resource sharing and communication strategies. All involved parties, lay as well as professional, need to be a part of this effort.

## Proposals

Two major proposals are outlined here as possible cohesive, proactive approaches to meeting the needs which were just enumerated. Both recommendations are directed toward the development of a sound partnership between parents and educators. The first proposed solution is related to the necessity for revising and improving traditional approaches to parent-school relationships through awareness-level public relations techniques; and the second is focused upon the training or skill building necessary to ensure the successful institutionalization of such a partnership.

## Proposal I

A concentrated, inter-agency effort must be initiated and maintained. This effort would provide information to all consumers, professional and lay, regarding both the specific components of a free, appropriate public education for all handicapped children, and toward this end, the benefits to be derived from a parent-school partnership.

To provide this information, it is suggested that use be made of existing dissemination systems and already known parent and professional constituency groups. For example, current federal regulations require that the following information regarding P.L. 94-142 be disseminated to parents: the rights and responsibilities of parents and handicapped children, sources of independent evaluations and legal counsel, and available local support services and known advocacy providers. Numerous agencies—for example, Closer Look and other advocacy groups, SEAs and LEAs, and various organized parent groups at the national, state, and local level—are actively involved in this effort. Their target audience is, for the most part, the parental community.

Concurrently, information directed to the professional educational community comes from equally diverse, however, functionally autonomous resource groups. Such groups or agencies as The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), the Information Coordination Service of the RRCs, the United School Administrators, the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), and the National Information Center for Special Education Materials (NICSEM) are examples of this significant resource allocation.

Collectively these parent and professional service agencies present a resource capacity that should not be ignored. However, the parody of this process is that the left hand may not know what the right hand is doing; and neither left nor right is successfully addressing the benefits of a functional parent-school partnership.

Organizationally it is proposed that BEH create, or cause to be created, a Partnership Task Force. Membership on this task force would be shared equally between parents and professional educators, each representing an agency or group known to have (a) an identified constituency, (b) an existing information dissemination system for its membership, and (c) a commitment to implementation of a functional parent-school partnership.

The single charge to the Task Force would be to design, implement, and evaluate a coordinated dissemination effort. This would include the identification and dissemination of all pertinent information and materials regarding the specific components of a free, appropriate public education and the benefits of a functional parent-school partnership. Specific coordinated strategies could be developed by the Task Force for securing maximal utilization of existing dissemination systems, reviewing existing materials, creating new materials to fill identified information gaps, and perpetuating an ongoing atmosphere of mutual sharing of such data across specialized interest groups. Every professional educator and parent of a handicapped child in the nation would then have access to this information.

## Proposal II

The need for training parents and educators to form an effective partnership leads to the formulation of Proposal II. In order for this partnership to evolve into an accepted working relationship, it is proposed that parents and educators form a partnership as co-trainers and implementers at both the state and local levels. The primary focus of this proposal would be to involve parents from the early planning stages, instructing them by modeling a partnership approach to training and encouraging an individualized approach to learning the required skills and techniques.

To exemplify the feasibility and encourage the desirability of this training partnership approach at the state level, key-trainers at the state level would be active members of the state committee responsible for the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. The State Governors' Advisory Board, the Developmental Disabilities Parent Advocacy Organization, and other similar groups would need to be closely tied into the model.

At the local level, a cascade approach would result in the state key-trainers preparing the local training partnership team, who in turn would work with parents and educators in the local system. For larger systems, several teams of key-trainers would be appropriate.

The formalization of this model suggests that the parents and educators work as professional trainers at the state level, making use of the multi-faceted resources available. The training model would utilize effective techniques based upon the needs and values of the teachers and parents involved. McAfee and Vergason (1979) describe the consequence of collaboration and cooperation as "power" when processes and techniques are used effectively.

In addition to the two previously stated solutions, the following are some specific suggestions for implementation.

1. Defining the emerging parent-school partnership through a national effort, under multi-agency sponsorship.
2. Developing a special relationship among national service agencies, RRCs, Closer Look, and other similar groups to examine approaches to parent involvement and collective resource sharing.
3. Collectively recognizing parents as part of the service providers' immediate client group so that direct service may be provided to them.
4. Giving parents representative membership on service agencies' advisory committees in order to obtain more direct parent input.
5. Sponsoring multi-agency national, regional, state, and local meetings on issues/barriers to adopting the parent-school relationship.
6. Evaluating some of the currently funded, BEH model programs for parent involvement, and, through a revised dissemination process, distributing that information on exemplary practices.

# *Summary*


With the passage of P.L. 94-142, new roles and relationships have been assigned to parents and educators. Parental involvement in the educational planning process for handicapped children is no longer optional, but mandatory. However, a parent-school partnership cannot be mandated by law. P.L. 94-142 guarantees parents the legal right for involvement, but it does not guarantee a parent-school partnership. Nearly two years have passed since the final regulations for the Education for All Handicapped Children Act were published; yet the data in this paper indicate that parents and educators are only beginning to appreciate the potential benefits that the parent-school partnership may provide for handicapped students.

Examination of current practice identified parent involvement activities occurring across the nation. Yet, the alarming fact remains: few parents and educators have successfully implemented a functional parent-school partnership. This statement would seem to accurately reflect the feelings of parents and educators across the country, as verified by the needs and concerns they identified for future activities which would enhance their involvement.

In order to identify solutions which may move us closer to that goal, first it was necessary to examine the concerns and needs identified by parents and educators regarding building a parent-school partnership. The following were identified as the most probable and significant:

1. Parents and educators are not prepared for their new role as equal partners in the educational planning process.
2. Parents and educators are not always convinced that the benefits of parental involvement are equal to the efforts expended.
3. A token level of parental involvement commonly exists and restricts that involvement to signatures on required forms.
4. A group of parents, referred to as "hard-to-reach," have had little involvement in the educational planning process.

The identification of these concerns provides direction for future planning and movement toward the goal of developing a new partnership between parents and educators. To this end, two directions or solutions are proposed: (1) a coordinated comprehensive information/awareness campaign regarding the parent-school partnership and (2) a partnership training approach at the state and local level.

It was noted that a multi-agency directed national awareness campaign (Proposal I) would provide parents and educators with information about the specific components of a free, appropriate public education and the benefits of the parent-school partnership. This awareness campaign would encompass a broad dissemination effort and include a coordination component to enlist the help and focus efforts of existing national, state and local organizations.

A partnership training approach (Proposal II) was identified as a vehicle for developing effective parent-school relationships. An examination of current practice showed that much of the present and past efforts to enhance parent involvement has centered around training. A combined parent-education training team to be directed from the state to the local school systems would address the training needs of both parents and educators.

The potential role of the RRCs as a resource for an awareness campaign as well as a training effort is evident. The RRCs, information centers providing an already established network for dissemination, could provide a blueprint for a multi-agency campaign. In much the same way, the RRCs' already established interest in training could provide techniques and processes that would result in the "power" noted by McAfee and Vergason (1979). By assisting in the processes suggested as possible solutions to establishing an effective parent-school partnership, RRCs would continue their established position as significant providers of information and training.

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# *Resource Listing*

The following represents a partial listing of RRC and DSC products that have been disseminated from 1977-1979 and are related to parental involvement in the educational process.

*California Regional Resource Center*

*To Parents of Children with Special Needs: A Manual on Parent Involvement in Educational Planning*
Anne Langstaff Pasanella and Cara B. Volkmor
103 pages. 1977.

Professional Supplement to accompany *To Parents of Children With Special Needs: A Manual on Parent Involvement in Educational Programming*
Anne Langstaff Pasanella and Cara B. Volkmor
16 pages. 1977.

Trainer's Manual for *Working Together for Quality Education: Seminars for Parents of Children with Exceptional Needs*
Anne Langstaff Pasanella
155 pages. 1979.

*District of Columbia Regional Resource Center*

*A Handbook for Parents and Guardians of Handicapped Children in the District of Columbia*
District of Columbia Regional Resource Center
32 pages. 1978.

*Illinois Regional Resource Center*

*Partnership with Parents*
Illinois Regional Resource Center
78 pages. 1977.

*Law and the Handicapped Child: A Primer for Illinois Parents*
Carl Schmidt and Mary Claire Williams
51 pages. 1978.

*Mid-East Regional Resource Center*

*Hand in Hand: Parents and Educators Planning for the Exceptional Child*
A guide adapted for individual state use in:
North Carolina, 92 pages, 1979
West Virginia, 63 pages, 1979
Delaware, publication date 1980

*Skills and Techniques for Working with Parents of Exceptional Children: An In-service Training Package for Teachers*
Trudy Costello and Nona Flynn
87 pages. 1979.

*Midwest Regional Resource Center*

*Parents and Educators: Partners in Individualized Education Program Planning for Handicapped Students*
Joyce Shaffer and Jane Bell
78 pages. 1978.

*For Parents Only . . . Practical Advice to Parents on Special Education*
Midwest Regional Resource Center
39 pages. 1979.

*Establishing the School-Parent Relationship in Special Education*
Jerry Caster
77 pages. 1979.

*An Annotated Bibliography on Effectively Including Parents in Special Education*
Midwest Regional Resource Center
10 pages. 1979.

*New York State Regional Resource Center*

*Your Child's Right to an Education: A Guide for Parents of Handicapped Children in New York State*
The University of the State of New York
31 pages. 1978

*Northeast Regional Resource Center*

*Vermont's Special Education Opportunities: A Parent Guide for Handicapped Students*
Lynn Baker and Douglas A. Fisher
15 pages. 1978.

*A Guide for Parents of the Educationally Handicapped in the State of New Hampshire*
Marguerite D'Amico
44 pages. 1978.

*A Parent Guide to Special Education in Connecticut*
Northeast Regional Resource Center and Connecticut
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20 pages. 1979.

*Northwest Regional Resource Center*

Parents' Guide 1, *The Education of Handicapped Children*
Montana State Education Egency and Northwest Regional Resource Center
10 pages. 1979.

Parents' Guide 2, *Evaluation and the Child Study Team*
Montana State Education Agency and Northwest Regional Resource Center
13 pages. 1979.

Parents' Guide 3, *Your Child's Individualized Education Program*
Montana State Education Agency and Northwest Regional Resource Center
10 pages. 1979.

Parents' Guide 4, *Your Rights As The Parent of A Handicapped Child*
Montana State Education Agency and Northwest Regional Resource Center
13 pages. 1978.

*Ohio Regional Resource Center*

*Guide to Special Services for Children in Central Ohio*

Ohio Regional Resource Center
315 pages. 1979

*Pennsylvania Regional Resource Center*

*Parents of the Handicapped in Partnership with Helping Professionals*

National Learning Resource Center of Pennsylvania
37 pages. 1977.

*Southeast Regional Resource Center*

*Inexpensive Books for Parents of Handicapped Children: A Bibliography*

Betty Beale
60 pages. 1978.

*Southwest Regional Resource Center*

*You and Your Special Child: An Educational Guide for Nevada Parents*

M. Colleen Driscoll
168 pages. 1978.

*Information Packet for Parents*

Southwest Regional Resource Center
36 pages. 1979.

*Direction Service Center, Western Los Angeles, California*

*Direction-1: A Guidebook for Families*

Western Los Angeles Direction Service
1978.